



## Senate

General Assembly

**File No. 9**

February Session, 2012

Substitute Senate Bill No. 39

*Senate, March 5, 2012*

The Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement reported through SEN. BYE of the 5th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the Senate, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

### ***AN ACT CONCERNING REQUIREMENTS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 10-16p of the 2012 supplement to the general  
2 statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof  
3 (*Effective July 1, 2012*):

4 (a) As used in sections 10-16o to 10-16s, inclusive, 10-16u, 17b-749a  
5 and 17b-749c:

6 (1) "School readiness program" means a nonsectarian program that  
7 (A) meets the standards set by the department pursuant to subsection  
8 (b) of this section and the requirements of section 10-16q, and (B)  
9 provides a developmentally appropriate learning experience of not less  
10 than four hundred fifty hours and one hundred eighty days for eligible  
11 children, except as provided in subsection (d) of section 10-16q;

12 (2) "Eligible children" means children three and four years of age

13 and children five years of age who are not eligible to enroll in school  
14 pursuant to section 10-15c, or who are eligible to enroll in school and  
15 will attend a school readiness program pursuant to section 10-16t;

16 (3) "Priority school" means a school in which forty per cent or more  
17 of the lunches served are served to students who are eligible for free or  
18 reduced price lunches pursuant to federal law and regulations,  
19 excluding such a school located in a priority school district pursuant to  
20 section 10-266p or in a former priority school district receiving a grant  
21 pursuant to subsection (c) of this section and, on and after July 1, 2001,  
22 excluding such a school in a transitional school district receiving a  
23 grant pursuant to section 10-16u;

24 (4) "Severe need school" means a school in a priority school district  
25 pursuant to section 10-266p or in a former priority school district in  
26 which forty per cent or more of the lunches served are served to  
27 students who are eligible for free or reduced price lunches;

28 (5) "Accredited" means accredited by the National Association for  
29 the Education of Young Children, a Head Start on-site program review  
30 instrument or a successor instrument pursuant to federal regulations,  
31 or otherwise meeting such criteria as may be established by the  
32 commissioner, in consultation with the Commissioner of Social  
33 Services, unless the context otherwise requires;

34 (6) "Year-round" means fifty weeks per year, except as provided in  
35 subsection (d) of section 10-16q;

36 (7) "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Education; and

37 (8) "Department" means the Department of Education.

38 (b) (1) The Department of Education shall be the lead agency for  
39 school readiness. For purposes of this section and section 10-16u,  
40 school readiness program providers eligible for funding from the  
41 Department of Education shall include local and regional boards of  
42 education, regional educational service centers, family resource centers  
43 and providers of child day care centers, as defined in section 19a-77,

44 Head Start programs, preschool programs and other programs that  
45 meet such standards established by the Commissioner of Education.  
46 The department shall establish standards for school readiness  
47 programs. The standards may include, but need not be limited to,  
48 guidelines for staff-child interactions, curriculum content, including  
49 preliteracy development, lesson plans, parent involvement, staff  
50 qualifications and training, transition to school and administration.  
51 The department shall develop age-appropriate developmental skills  
52 and goals for children attending such programs. The commissioner, in  
53 consultation with the president of the Board of Regents for Higher  
54 Education, the Commissioner of Social Services and other appropriate  
55 entities, shall develop a continuing education training program for the  
56 staff of school readiness programs.

57 (2) For purposes of this section:

58 (A) Prior to July 1, 2015, "staff qualifications" means there is in each  
59 classroom an individual who has at least the following: (i) A childhood  
60 development associate credential or an equivalent credential issued by  
61 an organization approved by the Commissioner of Education and  
62 twelve credits or more in early childhood education or child  
63 development, as determined by the president of the Board of Regents  
64 for Higher Education, after consultation with the Commissioners of  
65 Education and Social Services, from an institution of higher education  
66 (1) accredited by the Board of Regents for Higher Education or State  
67 Board of Education, and (2) regionally accredited; (ii) an associate's  
68 degree with twelve credits or more in early childhood education or  
69 child development, as determined by the president of the Board of  
70 Regents for Higher Education, after consultation with the  
71 Commissioners of Education and Social Services, from such an  
72 institution; (iii) a four-year degree with twelve credits or more in early  
73 childhood education or child development, as determined by the  
74 president of the Board of Regents for Higher Education, after  
75 consultation with the Commissioners of Education and Social Services,  
76 from such an institution; or (iv) certification pursuant to section 10-  
77 145b with an endorsement in early childhood education or special

78 education;

79 (B) From July 1, 2015, to June 30, 2020, "staff qualifications" means  
80 that for each early childhood education program accepting state funds  
81 [, including school readiness or childcare services funds and funds  
82 from the Department of Social Services] for spaces associated with  
83 such program's child day care program or school readiness program,  
84 (i) at least fifty per cent of those individuals with the primary  
85 responsibility for a classroom of children hold (I) certification pursuant  
86 to section 10-145b with an endorsement in early childhood education  
87 or early childhood special education, or (II) a bachelor's degree with a  
88 concentration in early childhood education, including, but not limited  
89 to, a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, child study, child  
90 development or human growth and development, from an institution  
91 of higher education (1) accredited by the Board of Regents for Higher  
92 Education or State Board of Education, and (2) regionally accredited,  
93 provided such bachelor's degree program is approved by the Board of  
94 Regents for Higher Education and the Department of Education, and  
95 (ii) such remaining individuals with the primary responsibility for a  
96 classroom of children hold an associate degree with a concentration in  
97 early childhood education, including, but not limited to, an associate's  
98 degree in early childhood education, child study, child development or  
99 human growth and development, from an institution of higher  
100 education (1) accredited by the Board of Regents for Higher Education  
101 or State Board of Education, and (2) regionally accredited, provided  
102 such associate degree program is approved by the Board of Regents for  
103 Higher Education and the Department of Education; and

104 (C) On and after July 1, 2020, "staff qualifications" means that for  
105 each early childhood education program accepting state funds [,  
106 including school readiness or childcare services funds and funds from  
107 the Department of Social Services] for spaces associated with such  
108 program's child day care program or school readiness program, one  
109 hundred per cent of those individuals with the primary responsibility  
110 for a classroom of children hold (i) certification pursuant to section 10-  
111 145b with an endorsement in early childhood education or early

112 childhood special education, or (ii) a bachelor's degree with a  
113 concentration in early childhood education, including, but not limited  
114 to, a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, child study, child  
115 development or human growth and development, from an institution  
116 of higher education (1) accredited by the Board of Regents for Higher  
117 Education or State Board of Education, and (2) regionally accredited,  
118 provided such bachelor's degree program is approved by the Board of  
119 Regents for Higher Education and the Department of Education.

120 (3) Any individual with a bachelor's degree who, on or before June  
121 30, 2015, is employed as a teacher by an early childhood education  
122 program that accepts state funds [, including school readiness or  
123 childcare services funds and funds from the Department of Social  
124 Services,] for spaces associated with such program's child day care  
125 program or school readiness program and meets the staff  
126 qualifications required under subparagraph (A) of subdivision (2) of  
127 this subsection shall be considered to meet the staff qualifications  
128 required under subparagraphs (B) and (C) of subdivision (2) of this  
129 subsection. No such early childhood education program shall  
130 terminate any such individual from employment for purposes of  
131 meeting the staff qualification requirements set forth in subparagraph  
132 (B) or (C) of subdivision (2) of this subsection. Any such individual  
133 who terminates his or her employment with such early childhood  
134 education program and accepts a teacher position at another early  
135 childhood education program accepting state funds for spaces  
136 associated with such program's child day care program or school  
137 readiness program shall submit documentation of such individual's  
138 progress toward meeting the staff qualification requirements set forth  
139 in subparagraph (B) or (C) of subdivision (2) of this subsection in a  
140 manner determined by the Department of Education.

141 (4) Any individual with a bachelor's degree other than those  
142 bachelor's degrees specified in subparagraphs (A) and (B) of  
143 subdivision (2) of this subsection may submit documentation  
144 concerning such degree for review and assessment by the Department  
145 of Education as to whether such degree has a sufficient concentration

146 in early childhood education so as to satisfy the requirements set forth  
147 in said subparagraphs (A) and (B).

148 (c) The Commissioner of Education, in consultation with the  
149 Commissioner of Social Services, shall establish a grant program to  
150 provide spaces in accredited school readiness programs for eligible  
151 children who reside in priority school districts pursuant to section 10-  
152 266p or in former priority school districts as provided in this  
153 subsection. Under the program, the grant shall be provided, in  
154 accordance with this section, to the town in which such priority school  
155 district or former priority school district is located. Eligibility shall be  
156 determined for a five-year period based on an applicant's designation  
157 as a priority school district for the initial year of application, except  
158 that if a school district that receives a grant pursuant to this subsection  
159 is no longer designated as a priority school district at the end of such  
160 five-year period, such former priority school district shall continue to  
161 be eligible to receive a grant pursuant to this subsection. Grant awards  
162 shall be made annually contingent upon available funding and a  
163 satisfactory annual evaluation. The chief elected official of such town  
164 and the superintendent of schools for such priority school district or  
165 former priority school district shall submit a plan for the expenditure  
166 of grant funds and responses to the local request for proposal process  
167 to the Departments of Education and Social Services. The departments  
168 shall jointly review such plans and shall each approve the portion of  
169 such plan within its jurisdiction for funding. The plan shall: (1) Be  
170 developed in consultation with the local or regional school readiness  
171 council established pursuant to section 10-16r; (2) be based on a needs  
172 and resource assessment; (3) provide for the issuance of requests for  
173 proposals for providers of accredited school readiness programs,  
174 provided, after the initial requests for proposals, facilities that have  
175 been approved to operate a child care program financed through the  
176 Connecticut Health and Education Facilities Authority and have  
177 received a commitment for debt service from the Department of Social  
178 Services pursuant to section 17b-749i, are exempt from the requirement  
179 for issuance of annual requests for proposals; and (4) identify the need  
180 for funding pursuant to section 17b-749a in order to extend the hours

181 and days of operation of school readiness programs in order to  
182 provide child day care services for children attending such programs.

183 (d) (1) The Commissioner of Education, in consultation with the  
184 Commissioner of Social Services, shall establish a competitive grant  
185 program to provide spaces in accredited school readiness programs for  
186 eligible children who reside (A) in an area served by a priority school  
187 or a former priority school as provided for in subdivision (2) of this  
188 subsection, (B) in a town ranked one to fifty when all towns are ranked  
189 in ascending order according to town wealth, as defined in subdivision  
190 (26) of section 10-262f, whose school district is not a priority school  
191 district pursuant to section 10-266p, or (C) in a town formerly a town  
192 described in subparagraph (B) of this subdivision, as provided for in  
193 subdivision (2) of this subsection. A town in which a priority school is  
194 located, a regional school readiness council, pursuant to subsection (c)  
195 of section 10-16r, for a region in which such a school is located or a  
196 town described in subparagraph (B) of this subdivision may apply for  
197 such a grant in an amount not to exceed one hundred seven thousand  
198 dollars per priority school or town. Eligibility shall be determined for a  
199 five-year period based on an applicant's designation as having a  
200 priority school or being a town described in subparagraph (B) of this  
201 subdivision for the initial year of application. Grant awards shall be  
202 made annually contingent upon available funding and a satisfactory  
203 annual evaluation. The chief elected official of such town and the  
204 superintendent of schools of the school district or the regional school  
205 readiness council shall submit a plan, as described in subsection (c) of  
206 this section, for the expenditure of such grant funds to the Department  
207 of Education. In awarding grants pursuant to this subsection, the  
208 commissioner shall give preference to applications submitted by  
209 regional school readiness councils and may, within available  
210 appropriations, provide a grant in excess of one hundred seven  
211 thousand dollars to towns with two or more priority schools in such  
212 district. A town or regional school readiness council awarded a grant  
213 pursuant to this subsection shall use the funds to purchase spaces for  
214 such children from providers of accredited school readiness programs.

215 (2) (A) Except as provided in subparagraph (C) of this subdivision,  
216 commencing with the fiscal year ending June 30, 2005, if a town  
217 received a grant pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection and is  
218 no longer eligible to receive such a grant, the town may receive a  
219 phase-out grant for each of the three fiscal years following the fiscal  
220 year such town received its final grant pursuant to subdivision (1) of  
221 this subsection.

222 (B) The amount of such phase-out grants shall be determined as  
223 follows: (i) For the first fiscal year following the fiscal year such town  
224 received its final grant pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, in  
225 an amount that does not exceed seventy-five per cent of the grant  
226 amount such town received for the town or school's final year of  
227 eligibility pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection; (ii) for the  
228 second fiscal year following the fiscal year such town received its final  
229 grant pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, in an amount that  
230 does not exceed fifty per cent of the grant amount such town received  
231 for the town's or school's final year of eligibility pursuant to  
232 subdivision (1) of this subsection; and (iii) for the third fiscal year  
233 following the fiscal year such town received its final grant pursuant to  
234 subdivision (1) of this subsection, in an amount that does not exceed  
235 twenty-five per cent of the grant amount such town received for the  
236 town's or school's final year of eligibility pursuant to subdivision (1) of  
237 this subsection.

238 (C) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2011, and each fiscal year  
239 thereafter, any town that received a grant pursuant to subparagraph  
240 (B) of subdivision (1) of this subsection for the fiscal year ending June  
241 30, 2010, shall continue to receive a grant under this subsection even if  
242 the town no longer meets the criteria for such grant pursuant to  
243 subparagraph (B) of subdivision (1) of this subsection.

244 (e) (1) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2009, and each fiscal year  
245 thereafter, priority school districts and former priority school districts  
246 shall receive grants based on the sum of the products obtained by (A)  
247 multiplying the district's number of contracted slots on March thirtieth



248 of the fiscal year prior to the fiscal year in which the grant is to be paid,  
249 by the per child cost pursuant to subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of  
250 section 10-16q, except that such per child cost shall be reduced for slots  
251 that are less than year-round, and (B) multiplying the number of  
252 additional or decreased slots the districts have requested for the fiscal  
253 year in which the grant is to be paid by the per child cost pursuant to  
254 subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of section 10-16q, except such per  
255 child cost shall be reduced for slots that are less than year-round. If  
256 said sum exceeds the available appropriation, such number of  
257 requested additional slots shall be reduced, as determined by the  
258 Commissioner of Education, to stay within the available appropriation.

259 (2) (A) If funds appropriated for the purposes of subsection (c) of  
260 this section are not expended, the Commissioner of Education may  
261 deposit such unexpended funds in the account established under  
262 section 10-16aa and use such unexpended funds in accordance with  
263 the provisions of section 10-16aa.

264 (B) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2012, and each fiscal year  
265 thereafter, if funds appropriated for the purposes of subsection (c) of  
266 this section are not expended, an amount up to five hundred thousand  
267 dollars of such unexpended funds may be available for use in  
268 accordance with the provisions of this subparagraph for the  
269 subsequent fiscal year. The Commissioner of Education may use such  
270 unexpended funds on and after July 1, 2012, in consultation with the  
271 president of the Board of Regents for Higher Education, to support  
272 early childhood education programs accepting state funds in satisfying  
273 the staff qualifications requirements of subparagraphs (B) and (C) of  
274 subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of this section. The [local school  
275 readiness programs] Department of Education shall use any such  
276 funds to provide assistance to individual staff members, giving  
277 priority to those staff members attending an institution of higher  
278 education (1) accredited by the Board of Regents for Higher Education  
279 or State Board of Education, and (2) regionally accredited, at a  
280 maximum of five thousand dollars per staff member per year for the  
281 cost of higher education courses leading to a bachelor's degree or, not

282 later than December 31, 2013, an associate's degree, as such degrees are  
283 described in said subparagraphs (B) and (C) at an in-state public  
284 institution of higher education or a Connecticut-based for-profit or  
285 nonprofit institution of higher education, provided such staff members  
286 have applied for all available federal and state scholarships and grants,  
287 and such assistance does not exceed such staff members' financial  
288 need. [Local school readiness programs] Individual staff members  
289 shall apply for such unexpended funds in [such program's application  
290 for a school readiness grant pursuant to this section] a manner  
291 determined by the Department of Education. The Commissioner of  
292 Education shall determine, in consultation with the president of the  
293 Board of Regents for Higher Education, how such unexpended funds  
294 shall be distributed.

295 (C) If funds appropriated for the purposes of subsection (c) of this  
296 section are not expended pursuant to subsection (c) of this section,  
297 deposited pursuant to subparagraph (A) of this subdivision, or used  
298 pursuant to subparagraph (B) of this subdivision, the Commissioner of  
299 Education may use such unexpended funds to support local school  
300 readiness programs. The commissioner may use such funds for  
301 purposes including, but not limited to, (i) assisting local school  
302 readiness programs in meeting and maintaining accreditation  
303 requirements, (ii) providing training in implementing the preschool  
304 assessment and curriculum frameworks, including training to enhance  
305 literacy teaching skills, (iii) developing a state-wide preschool  
306 curriculum, (iv) developing student assessments for students in grades  
307 kindergarten to two, inclusive, (v) developing and implementing best  
308 practices for parents in supporting preschool and kindergarten student  
309 learning, (vi) developing and implementing strategies for children to  
310 transition from preschool to kindergarten, (vii) providing for  
311 professional development, including assisting in career ladder  
312 advancement, for school readiness staff, and (viii) providing  
313 supplemental grants to other towns that are eligible for grants  
314 pursuant to subsection (c) of this section.

315 (3) Notwithstanding subdivision (2) of this subsection, for the fiscal

316 years ending June 30, 2008, to June 30, 2013, inclusive, the Department  
317 of Education may retain up to one hundred ninety-eight thousand two  
318 hundred dollars of the amount appropriated for purposes of this  
319 section for coordination, program evaluation and administration.

320 (f) Any school readiness program that receives funds pursuant to  
321 this section or section 10-16u shall not discriminate on the basis of race,  
322 color, national origin, gender, religion or disability. For purposes of  
323 this section, a nonsectarian program means any public or private  
324 school readiness program that is not violative of the Establishment  
325 Clause of the Constitution of the State of Connecticut or the  
326 Establishment Clause of the Constitution of the United States of  
327 America.

328 (g) Subject to the provisions of this subsection, no funds received by  
329 a town pursuant to subsection (c) or (d) of this section or section 10-  
330 16u shall be used to supplant federal, state or local funding received by  
331 such town for early childhood education, provided a town may use an  
332 amount determined in accordance with this subsection for  
333 coordination, program evaluation and administration. Such amount  
334 shall be at least twenty-five thousand dollars but not more than  
335 seventy-five thousand dollars and shall be determined by the  
336 Department of Education, in consultation with the Department of  
337 Social Services, based on the school readiness grant award allocated to  
338 the town pursuant to subsection (c) or (d) of this section or section 10-  
339 16u and the number of operating sites for coordination, program  
340 evaluation and administration. Such amount shall be increased by an  
341 amount equal to local funding provided for early childhood education  
342 coordination, program evaluation and administration, not to exceed  
343 twenty-five thousand dollars. Each town that receives a grant pursuant  
344 to subsection (c) or (d) of this section or section 10-16u shall designate  
345 a person to be responsible for such coordination, program evaluation  
346 and administration and to act as a liaison between the town and the  
347 Departments of Education and Social Services. Each school readiness  
348 program that receives funds pursuant to this section or section 10-16u  
349 shall provide information to the department or the school readiness

350 council, as requested, that is necessary for purposes of any school  
351 readiness program evaluation.

352 (h) For the first three years a town receives grants pursuant to this  
353 section, such grants may be used, with the approval of the  
354 commissioner, to prepare a facility or staff for operating a school  
355 readiness program and shall be adjusted based on the number of days  
356 of operation of a school readiness program if a shorter term of  
357 operation is approved by the commissioner.

358 (i) A town may use grant funds to purchase spaces for eligible  
359 children who reside in such town at an accredited school readiness  
360 program located in another town. A regional school readiness council  
361 may use grant funds to purchase spaces for eligible children who  
362 reside in the region covered by the council at an accredited school  
363 readiness program located outside such region.

364 (j) Children enrolled in school readiness programs funded pursuant  
365 to this section shall not be counted (1) as resident students for  
366 purposes of subdivision (22) of section 10-262f, or (2) in the  
367 determination of average daily membership pursuant to subdivision  
368 (2) of subsection (a) of section 10-261.

369 (k) Up to two per cent of the amount of the appropriation for this  
370 section may be allocated to the competitive grant program pursuant to  
371 subsection (d) of this section. The determination of the amount of such  
372 allocation shall be made on or before August first.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	July 1, 2012	10-16p

**Statement of Legislative Commissioners:**

In section 1(b)(2)(A), 1(b)(2)(B), 1(b)(2)(C) and 1(e)(2)(B) for the purpose of clarity, "(1)" and "(2)" were added.

**HED**      *Joint Favorable Subst.*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

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**OFA Fiscal Note**

**State Impact:** None

**Municipal Impact:** None

**Explanation**

The bill makes several changes to early childhood educators' required qualifications and is not anticipated to result in a fiscal impact.

The bill: modifies the types of schools from which individuals may earn a qualifying degree, requires staff members who are exempt from meeting the qualifications and who accept a position with a different school readiness program to submit documentation of their progress toward qualifications, and requires individual staff members to apply for any unexpended balance in school readiness funds. To date, no funds have been allocated from the State Department of Education (SDE) for the purposes of funding early childhood teachers in state funded centers.

**The Out Years**

**State Impact:** None

**Municipal Impact:** None

**OLR Bill Analysis****sSB 39*****AN ACT CONCERNING REQUIREMENTS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS.*****SUMMARY:**

This bill makes several changes to the law regarding early childhood educators' required qualifications. It (1) modifies the types of schools from which individuals may earn a qualifying degree; (2) requires staff members who are exempt from meeting the qualifications and who accept employment with a different school readiness program to submit documentation on their progress toward the qualifications; and (3) requires individual staff members, rather than school readiness programs, to apply for any unexpended school readiness funds. It also makes conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2012

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR REQUIREMENTS**

The law establishes required qualifications for early childhood educators (see BACKGROUND). Under current law, educators may meet these requirements by, among other things, earning a degree or credential in certain programs from an institution accredited by the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR). The bill instead requires institutions to be accredited by BOR or the State Board of Education (SBE) and regionally accredited. The inclusion of SBE conforms to PA 11-48, which made SBE responsible for accrediting independent institutions of higher education in Connecticut.

Current law applies the staff qualification requirements to all preschool programs accepting state funds, including school readiness or childcare services funds and Department of Social Services funds. The bill instead applies the requirements to programs accepting state

funds for spaces associated with their child day care program or school readiness program.

## **EXCEPTIONS**

By law, individuals who (1) hold bachelor's degrees and are employed as teachers on or before June 30, 2015 by an early childhood education program accepting state funds and (2) meet the qualification requirements that are in effect until June 30, 2015 are exempt from the requirements that take effect on July 1, 2015 and July 1, 2020.

If an exempt individual terminates employment with his or her current early childhood education program and accepts employment with a different early childhood education program, the bill requires him or her to submit documentation of his or her progress toward meeting the staff qualifications. The bill does not specify to whom the documentation must be submitted, but requires the State Department of Education (SDE) to determine the manner of submission.

## **UNEXPENDED SCHOOL READINESS FUNDS**

The bill removes local school readiness programs from the process of awarding unexpended readiness funds to help staff meet state qualifications. By law, the education commissioner may use up to \$500,000 in unexpended school readiness funds from each fiscal year in the subsequent fiscal year to help early childhood education programs staff members meet the qualification requirements. The bill requires individual staff members, rather than school readiness programs, to apply for unexpended funds and requires the education commissioner to determine the manner of application.

It also requires SDE, rather than the local school readiness program, to provide the assistance to staff members. In awarding assistance, SDE must give preference to staff members attending a BOR- or SBE-accredited institution that is also regionally accredited.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Early Childhood Educator Requirements***

Until July 1, 2015, the law requires that in each school readiness classroom, there is an individual with (1) a childhood development credential, associate's degree, or bachelor's degree that includes 12 credits or more in early childhood education or child development or (2) a teaching certificate with an endorsement in early childhood education or special education. The credentialing organization must be approved by the education commissioner, and the early childhood education or childhood development credits must be from an institution accredited by BOR or regionally accredited. The early childhood education or child development credits must be determined by the BOR president, in consultation with the education and social services commissioners.

By law, from July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2020, at least 50% of individuals with primary responsibility for a classroom of children must have (1) a bachelor's degree with a concentration in early childhood education from an institution accredited by BOR or (2) a teaching certificate with an endorsement in early childhood or early childhood special education. Early childhood educators who do not meet this requirement must hold an associate's degree in an eligible field.

Effective July 1, 2020, the law requires that all, rather than only 50%, of the individuals with primary responsibility for a classroom of children meet the requirement to have a bachelor's degree or teaching certificate.

## **COMMITTEE ACTION**

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 16 Nay 0 (02/21/2012)